

# Military Culture: Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals

## Module 2: Military Organization and Roles

### Transcript

#### Module 2 Introduction

**Dr. Watson:** Welcome back to "Military Culture: Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals." Hi, I'm Dr. Patricia Watson with the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Dr. Brim:** Hi, I'm Dr. William Brim, with the Department of Defense's Center for Deployment Psychology.

**Dr. Watson:** In Module 1 of this course, Self-Awareness and Military Ethos, you gained a better understanding of how military ethos can impact your patient's views, identity, and behavior. Using the iceberg analogy, these are the values and guiding ideals existing "below the waterline" that create enduring and powerful characteristics of military culture.

**Dr. Brim:** In Module 2, the focus will be on the more visible or surface aspects of the military culture, those that can be observed "above the waterline." You'll gain an understanding of how some of the more tangible elements of the military, such as its customs and courtesies, serve to reinforce military ethos and culture.

**Dr. Watson:** In Module 2, you'll learn:

- Key functions and roles in Military organizations
- How military organizations and roles impact Service members' and Veterans' lives
- How military organizations and roles impact Service members' and Veterans' in need of healthcare, and
- How to apply knowledge of Military organizations and roles to improve practice.

**Dr. Brim:** Our hope is that as you learn these aspects of military culture, you'll be better equipped to explore how each of your patients uniquely relate to the order, discipline, and regulations required of military Service members. Welcome to Module 2, Military Organizations and Roles.

#### In Their Own Words: Being in the Military

##### **Matthew A. Baine, Logistics Supply Sergeant, U.S. Army**

I chose to join the military because I was in high school; I needed a lot of discipline. There were things that I didn't understand that has happened throughout history, and I'm a very patriotic person so I thought, you know, if none of my friends will do it I should do it. So, that's why I came into the military.

##### **Sean Hoyer, Major, U.S. Air Force Reserve, Clinical Social Worker**

I think that probably I started to consider service probably about midcareer, maybe 26-27 years old. I think I thought about service of some sort for many years as I was growing up. My family really instilled in me this value of community service in whatever sense that might be. My mom was a teacher, my father was a minister, but there was always that intent that I was given some sort of ability and if there was a need that I therefore had some sort of responsibility to try to fill that need. So, certainly considered military service as one way to be able to give back to my community.

**Alma Sanchez, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps**

I've changed a lot because of the Marine Corps. I think like obviously I'm 27 now. When I joined, I was 17. And I grew up with my mom being a single parent. And she had 8 kids. My father left us. And just seeing that as a challenge to (pause) to do better you know, and to bring my family out of what it was when I was younger, you know, and seeing my mom struggle and stuff, so I chose the Marine Corps because of that. Because I knew I wanted to become a Marine, but it didn't hit me until I started helping support my family. And I didn't realize that, you know, I do love it, and without it I probably wouldn't have been able to do all the things that I have done for my mother, my brothers, and sisters. And I think I've given up a lot as far as me as a person to make sure that I can provide a better future for them. And I've been very lucky to say that. I mean even though I'm, I've, I've been away from my family for a few years now. I've been lucky to say that I've gotten to travel and done things that I probably wouldn't have done if I wouldn't have joined the Marine Corps.

**Bill Ferguson, Veteran, U.S. Army**

I was from a little hillbilly town in Alabama, and basically I wanted a larger world view, a greater perspective. I mean the life there is very (pause), no matter what, I mean, it's the same. So, it was adventure partially, but I think when you ask folks this question, it's a deeply personal question. They never join for political reasons. Like here in DC we'll always assume that, but it's never a political reason that someone would join. I believe that they join for the love of country, and this is just what our forefathers have done, and that's just continuing that tradition.

**Michael Proia, Veteran, U.S. Army**

There's a pride serving; there was a pride being in the infantry, more so than anything else. Honestly, I wouldn't change anything about it, you know. I still would've been in the army, still would've been in the infantry, I wouldn't have wanted to be any other MOS. Did my time, served with pride, so.

**In Their Own Words: Military Culture and Healthcare Providers****Angela Gilbert, Captain, U.S. Air Force**

I think some civilian providers probably make assumptions about Service members that maybe they're all the same or they all have very similar experiences, and that's definitely not true. Each branch, I know, has their own flavor if you will and different expectations of their Service members. There is an overall military culture, I guess, but to take the time to get to know each branch's mission and even within the branches the different jobs that people are asked to do I think would be very useful.

**Brandy Hellman, Captain, U.S. Army**

I'd like civilian providers to know that military culture is important because this is who we are; this is what we identify as. And when a Service member is reaching out for help, whether it's through behavioral health or through physical medicine kind of care that what comes out of that appointment may have rippling effects for that Service member. To be very mindful of the diagnosis that you give and the recommendations that you give because it's not about just that hour or that half hour exchange that you had with that patient. That's going in a record; that's going to be part of who they are for the rest of their career. So, what you put in their record is really important and can have significant effects.

**Matthew Steiner, Veteran, U.S. Marine Corps**

I have heard that medical providers who are not Veterans will say "Well, I don't know if a Veteran-Veteran will listen to me because I've never been there." And in my mind, and I've talked to some pals about that, I think that's a false assumption because I think if you're there to help, - now with some Veterans they want to talk to another Veteran, make no mistake about that, - but if that provider understands, you know, what that, you know, understands and is sympathetic I think to what that Veteran is going to, then I don't think, then I think, that to go back, that that stereotype needs to go away because you don't have to be a Veteran, as long as you understand and be sympathetic to what that Veteran's going through.

**Ronald Barnes, Lance Corporal , U.S. Marine Corps**

If you're in the military, you understand terminology, you understand how the military is run, you understand operations, you understand conflict. If you're a civilian, you're not going to be able to relate to me as an individual because you have gone your way, I've gone mine and there's this gap, a division in between us and if you come in there and try to talk to me as you think I want to be talked to, I can tell that you're not being honest, you're not being real. If you say one thing to me and then go around the corner within hearing distance and start running your mouth and start talking about something else, then I can tell right off the bat, you don't care about me. You care about doing your job which is a good and a bad thing. I want a doctor to do their job, but at the same time I want my doctors to care about me as an individual and not as room 203 or a patient, just care about me as an individual. Try to learn military culture from me. Try to learn what the terminology I'm using is.

**Elizabeth Rishkofski, Senior Airman, U.S. Air Force Reserve**

I would like, you know, for the providers to know, you know, especially civilian providers to try to understand what the military's about, to try to understand the, to actually sit down and talk to a military person and find out, "Hey, what is, you know, how was the military? How do you like it?" You know. Try to get a perspective because again that's my perspective as an individual. And there's so many Service members out there, and not one is the same. Not one deals with a situation. One person can deploy and be okay. Another one can, I mean, it's not. Another one can hide it very well. I mean, there's so many out there; there's so many situations, so many different thoughts, so many different stress levels. It's just, it just depends. I think that providers need to, especially civilian, need to, you know, want to understand, want to say, "You know what? I'm going to try to understand. I'm gonna see, I'm going to—", even if just to study the person say, "Hey, do you mind if I ask you a question? Do you mind if I get your perspective on this situation and this and that? Can you explain this to me?"

**In Their Own Words: Diversity of Military Culture****Dr. Bruce Capehart, Veteran, U.S. Army Reserve**

There is an entire book or even set of books to be written on military subculture. You can see some of this within sort of the intraservice rivalries between the different military branches, and even within a single military branch you can see rivalries.

For example, I had two friends of mine, one was a Navy Veteran and one was an Air Force Veteran, and the Navy Veteran remarked to the Air Force Veteran one time there are more airplanes in the bottom of the ocean than there are submarines in the sky. And within the Army where I served, there are numerous good natured jibes from one group to another from the infantry versus everybody else.

It's often very amusing to listen to and to look at, but it is all done out of a nature of respect, and I think a good civilian analogy might be to look at something like the New York City Fire Department Hockey League that plays the New York Police Department's Hockey League. There is an intense rivalry, but there's also a huge amount of respect. They understand that they are each doing something valuable and important even though they internally believe their mission is more important than the other one, but there is a rivalry, but they also respect each other quite a bit.

**Shane Worland, Senior Chief Petty Officer, U.S. Navy**

I have seen several instances where they can come back from a deployment and just really be out of touch with, you know, society, even just kind of reality—especially someone that's never done a deployment, someone who is out of their specialty, you know, a gunner's mate or sonar tech, you know, who has spent all his days, you know, on ship and doing that stuff and then all of a sudden is asked to go to Iraq or Afghanistan for a year and work with the Army. I mean, that right there is a huge shock on the individual and then have to come back and then jump right back into ship board life.

## **U.S. Army Roles**

I am a soldier in the United States Army, the oldest and largest branch of service. My mission is to fight and win our Nation's wars by providing prompt, sustained land dominance across the full range of military operations and spectrum of conflict in support of combatant commanders. I may assist this mission in a variety of jobs from Infantryman to Field Surgeon to Attack Helicopter Repairer to Cavalry Scout to Motor Transport Operator to Armor Crewman. My MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) describes my occupation. When I talk about organizational structure, I will use words like Unit, Squad, Platoon, Company, Battalion, Brigade, Division, Corps. I will most often refer to my uniforms as "ACUs" (or Army Combat Uniform) and "Class A's" or "Army Greens.". My Core Values are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.

## **U.S. Navy Roles**

I am a Sailor in the United States Navy, the second largest military service branch. My mission is to maintain, train, and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom on the sea, under the sea, and in the air. I may assist this mission in a variety of jobs from Nuclear Propulsion Plant Operator to Sonar Technician to Missile Technician to Builder to Hospital Corpsman. My NEC (Navy Enlisted Classification) describes my occupation. When I talk about organizational structure, I will use words like Ship, Squadron, Base, Air Station, Department, Division, and Work Center. I will most often refer to my uniforms as NWUs (Navy Working Uniforms), Service Uniforms (SUs), or Service Dress Uniforms ("Cracker Jacks"). My Core Values are Honor, Courage, and Commitment.

## **U.S. Marine Corps Roles**

I am a Marine in the United States Marine Corps, the smallest of all the military services. My mission is to conduct amphibious warfare. I may assist in this mission in a variety of jobs from Assault Amphibious Vehicle Crewman (AAV Crewman) to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician (EOD Technician) to Aircraft Communications Systems Technician to Food Services Specialist to Infantry Unit Leader to Warehouse Chief. My MOS (that's Military Occupational Specialty) describes my occupation. When I talk about organizational structure, I will use words like Marine Expeditionary Force (or MEF), Marine Expeditionary Unit (or MEU) [myoo], and Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). I will most often refer to my uniforms as "Dress Blues" and "Utes" [yoots] or "MCCUUs," which are Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniforms. My Core Values are Honor, Courage, Commitment.

## **U.S. Air Force Roles**

I am an Airman in the United States Air Force, the youngest of all the military services. My mission is to fly, fight, and win in air, space and cyberspace. I may assist in this mission in a variety of jobs from pilot, to mechanic on the flight line, to Explosive Ordnance Disposal, cyber systems operations, to a cargo loader, to a pediatrician, to member of Security Forces. My AFSC (Air Force Specialty Code) describes my occupation. When I talk about organizational structure, I will use words like Flight, Squadron, Group and Wing. I will most often refer to my uniforms as "Blues" and "ABUs" (Air Battle Uniform). My Core Values are Integrity first, Service before self, and Excellence in all we do.

## **U.S. Coast Guard Roles**

I am a Coast Guardsman in the United States Coast Guard, which simultaneously and at all times is a military force and federal law enforcement agency dedicated to safety, security, and stewardship missions and the only branch of the U.S. Armed Forces that falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security. My mission is to save lives, protect the environment, defend the homeland, and enforce Federal laws on the high seas, the nation's coastal waters and its inland waterways. I may assist this mission in a variety of jobs from Marine Science Technician, Health Services Technician, Boatswain's Mate, Aviation Survival Technician, Port Security Specialist, Yeoman, or Gunner's Mate. If enlisted, my rating describes my occupation. When I talk about organizational structure, I will use words like District, Sectors, SFO (Sector Field Offices), Air Station, ANT (or Aids to Navigation Team), BSU (or Base Support Units), Cutter, MSOs (or Marine Safety Offices), and PSUs (or Port Security Units). I will most often refer to my uniforms as ODUs (or Operational Dress Uniform) or SDB (Service Dress Blue). My Core Values are Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty.

## **In Their Own Words: Guard and Reserve Issues**

### **Sean Hoyer, Major, U.S. Air Force Reserves, Clinical Social Worker**

I think one of the most important things that community providers should know about working with the military member is that these military members are everywhere. Over 1.5 million Americans serve in the reserves currently. While that's a small percentage of the American public, it's also kind of a hidden identity. You see us Monday through Friday and we're working next to you, we're shopping in your same grocery stores, our kids are going to the same schools, but we've also got these other responsibilities, these other obligations. And certainly as a family member of a military member, the removal of that from the military community might be a little difficult to keep track of. Those community service providers might not know who they're working with and what some of the other cultural implications of being within the military are.

### **Michael Duesterhaus, U.S. Navy Reserves, Chaplain**

See when the guys came home from World War II and there were literally millions and millions of men who all served, they had a thing called group therapy, otherwise known as going down to the VFW and having a drink together. They all commiserated and could all hang out and they got through it. The military is much smaller; fewer people have deployed. I'm always concerned about the National Guardsmen because they have seen a great deal of action. Every National Guard Unit has at least two combat tours under their belt. But they go back to a part of the country that may not even have a military base. They're going to go back and become the high school teacher, they're going to go back and become the EMT or fireman, and we have to make sure not to forget them.

## **In Their Own Words: The Uniform**

### **Matthew Johnson, Construction Mechanic Chief, U.S. Navy**

It definitely tells you where you've been, who you are, what unit you're with. It tells you how you carry yourself. Tells you if you're squared away or not. It tells you it's a symbol of pride. I mean, even within the military, you guys notice I'm in a completely different uniform than my fellow sailors would be on the ships. I mean it's, like I said earlier it's kind of your identity and who you are, and it shows your sense of pride, who we are. How you wear the uniform actually means more than what the uniform is.

### **Brandy Hellman, Captain, U.S. Army**

... since I've come back I'm required to wear this uniform, and I don't really like it. I liked wearing the uniform that I deployed in because to me it said that I've done something really great. I took a lot of pride in wearing my patch on my right arm which signified that I had deployed. So, the uniform is big, something that I identify greatly with. It's been in my family and it sets me apart from everybody else riding the subway or driving into work.

**Adrian Evans, Lieutenant (Junior Grade), U.S. Navy**

The military uniform can give you—it tells you a lot about a person. On the exterior it can tell you approximately how long they've been in the military, what their job is, what responsibilities they have, and what they've done with their career. So, it can tell you a general—it's almost a walking resume. However, what that means about a person on the inside is that they've committed themselves to, well, if you're in this country, they've committed themselves to you. They've made the commitment for at least to give four, five years of their life to service you in whatever way the country needs, and it means they are willing to serve. And to me that speaks volumes about their character.

**Yasmiro Castillo, Logistics Specialist Seaman, U.S. Navy**

I think our military uniform tells us courage about one another. You know, when I see someone in uniform, even when I look at myself in the mirror, courage, fearless, proud—I think of all those things when I see us in uniform or I see an individual in uniform.

**Matias Ferreira, Lance Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps**

When you see somebody and you don't know any better, you don't know what the symbols are, you don't know what the ranks are, you don't know what the rewards and awards are on your chest that you wear. You think that you just go graduate from boot camp and you're going to have all those things. That's not right. You graduate with one ribbon if you're going through that time and phase. You learn to work yourself up to those awards that you have. Being a Marine, nothing's given. Everything is earned. Everything that I wear on my chest, as in my awards, my ribbons, my medals, I earned every single bit of it. I worked hard for it and that's how you can explain something to somebody.

**In Their Own Words: Contracts****Daniel Hill, Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps**

We signed a contract okay; we sign. Everyone knows Marines fight wars. You know what I mean. And Marines die. Marines get blown up. That's what Marines do. And we keep fighting no matter what, and that's what we're supposed to do. So, for the bleeding hearts out there, I mean no, don't feel sorry for them. Yeah, you can feel bad all you want; don't feel sorry for them.

**Mark Minkler, Veteran, U.S. Air Force**

So, there's a very high degree of camaraderie and trust between Service Members. So, you know, like I said, there's that sense of duty, honor, country. I remember as, when I was becoming a military officer and we studied the culture of the military and there was a saying that "an officer's word is his bond." And it actually came out of the 1800s where it meant that an officer's word and his handshake was as good as a signed contract. So, like I said, it's that commitment, a higher ethical standard, and the committing yourself to the greater good I think is a large part of the military culture.

**In Their Own Words: Customs and Courtesies****Dan Freeland, Field Medical Technician Corpsman, U.S. Navy**

Military courtesies and customs are very important. It establishes your service, it establishes pride in yourself and your nation. You're representing not only your service as a whole, but if you're a petty officer, you're representing all the petty officers, representing all the chiefs in the Navy, all your fellow Naval officers, all your Army Soldiers, all your Air Force. It's a very important piece of not only, you know, service specific culture, but military culture in itself, that's what makes us the military. Saluting, showing a sign of respect to someone who's superior to you, giving them the greeting of the day, opening doors, walking a certain way, watching your formation, attention to detail, it's all what makes us military.

**Matthew Rosine, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Air Force**

I think military courtesies are very important. Now maybe that's because I'm kind of an old-fashioned guy, grew up in a small town with old-fashioned parents and, you know, so I was part of that kind of old-fashioned culture but, but that's I think one of the things that really makes the military distinct is the fact that we hold such traditions, you know, we hold them sacred if you will. We really pay attention to those things. Because really, you know, anybody can be polite, but there's a difference between being polite and being courteous. And, you know, we try and, in the Air Force, you know, one of our core values is excellence in all we do. And so if you're going to do it, don't just be polite, be courteous—that's excellence in all you do. Making sure that you say Sir and Ma'am to everybody, making sure that you listen when people talk to you and that you give them the due respect of listening when they talk. I mean, there's a whole different degree of that that I think comes part and parcel with being in the military, wearing the uniform. And I know some of those things might be small, but as they say, the devil's in the details, so I think that's why courtesies are very important in the military and why they should be.

**Michael Duesterhaus, Chaplain, U.S. Navy**

Military courtesies are what keep us from becoming a marauding band of Vikings, a bunch of biker gang members. We can be down range, six days without a shower, really not particularly happy with the MREs we have to eat; the best water we have is warm, but we are still going to say please and thank you. We are going to stand when the CO comes in. We're going to keep that structure in place so when something is said to be done, it's nothing personal against you. The sergeant is trying to get his task done. It is these, some cases, almost ancient traditions of how we treat the colors, how we stand at attention, the honors we give to the dead. These things are important because not only does it form us in our identity, it makes us remember we're part of a larger historical group of people going back literally millennia to the beginning of what is civilization. What is the difference between Army and a bunch of barbarians? And they're very easy to devolve and to become just a group of fairly stupid knuckle draggers. I had a mass in a small camp called Karma, we had a company there; a lot of guys had been put out on missions. Only about three guys that one day were able to make it to mass, and they were dirty, but their weapons were clean. And they were ready.

**Christopher Wadsworth, Chief Mechanic 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, U.S. Navy**

Military courtesies is one of the biggest things that we need to remember. Courtesies is what keeps the Navy going, keeps the military going period. Without courtesies, it'd be just another job. I'll use the ships for example. When ships—when ships pass one another, there's customs and courtesies that you do. There's horns that's blown. Three horn, one horn's blown for attention and they salute the ship when they pass, and then three horns to carry on, and it's just a sign of respect when you pass, one vessel to another, and without that it would just be like a commercial vessel passing another commercial vessel.

**Shane Worland, Senior Chief Petty Officer, U.S. Navy**

They are very important. It's kind of a sense of who we are. You'll see signs around naval station here, "Render salutes with pride," and that, you know, stems from when the military was first, you know, started up. Military curtsies have been around from the dawn of the military.

**In Their Own Words: Chain of Command****Matthew Johnson, Construction Mechanic Chief, U.S. Navy**

Well, the chain of command can be a strength or a weakness. Okay. If the chain of command's working in unison, like anything else it's your best friend in the world. If the chain of command's not working in unison, then it's your Achilles heel.

**Brandy Hellman, Clinical Psychologist, U.S. Army**

The phrase chain of command means a lot of things to me. It's part of good order and discipline in the military in that there's a certain way things are done. There's certain chain of command that has to be followed. You can't have a bunch of individuals running around. There's got to be some kind of order. So, in some ways the chain of command can be a great thing. It sets forward the bar. It sets forward the standard. You know what to expect. In order to get this task accomplished, you've got to do these things and speak to these people. Sometimes the chain of command can be very frustrating because you need to talk to somebody at a higher level, but you've got to hit each person along the chain of command. So, it can be a great thing. It can be a great help and a great asset.

**Matthew A. Baine, Logistics Supply Sergeant, U.S. Army**

Chain of command. I would say to me chain of command is exactly what it is. It's a chain. I feel like it's a chain that shouldn't be broken at all. They're fathers, they're mothers, and we're children in the unit. The Soldiers and junior NCO's, we're like children in a family. And those mothers and those fathers that are in the chain of command, they should give us, like I said earlier, values and morals and good discipline and responsibility. Furthermore, when we have an issue, when we run into an issue, a chain a command, we should be able to use all the links in the chain of command to get through any issue or any trial or tribulation that we have going on as a Service member in the military.

**Eldria Burkett, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army**

If you are not in the military, like, the chain of command is pretty much officers that are in charge from lowest to highest to take care, well, for an enlisted person, our needs and our wants. And it's the thing where on our side, we are very respectful, or we respect everybody, but officers we may respect a little bit more just because of rank. And with providers, they need to know that even though you are a provider and you are not in the military, when it comes to health care it is very important for us that you don't look at that rank the same way as we would look at that rank. At least with the medical care, we want to feel like everybody is going to be, you know, treated fairly and is going to be the same way across the board. So, it is good to know the ranks, but not treat them as such as a military person would treat them. So, that's pretty much, I would think that would be a good thing for providers to know, that there is not going to be any difference, you know, at all.

**Life Chapter 1: Before Enlistment or Commission - In Their Own Words****Matias Ferreira, Lance Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps**

You know, a lot of people go over there for the wrong reason, and it's really hard hearing their stories afterwards. During boot camp, a lot of people ask you why did you join the Marines. Oh, because of the pretty uniform or because I'll be able to pick up girls at a bar when they see me in my dress blues, and my answer was never that and it never changed. It was always the same answer then, and it's going to be the same answer now, and it's going to be the same answer when I die. I just wanted to serve my country, and I think that this country has done a lot for me and my family—enough for me to go over there and sacrifice what I did, and I got out easy.

**Mark Jenkins, Master Sergeant, U.S. Air Force**

I can tell that they're really committed. That's the first thing I think of because I know what it took for me to be able to wear the uniform—you know, just the initial basic training and tech school. So, I see commitment, and I see that they're willing to go to war for their country. You have to be if you're going to wear that uniform. Actually, when I see somebody in uniform, it's almost like I want to salute them no matter if they're officer, enlisted. That's why I've never had a problem saluting an officer. I wish the enlisted saluted each other. It's almost like a badge...

**A. Scott Specht, Graduate School of Nursing Student, U.S. Army**

I think strengths in the military culture are many. The esprit-de-corps, the help your buddy. I mean I've been in the Army 20 years, and guys I went to basic training with I still keep in contact with. It's just you share a common bond that is not easily broken. And sharing common hardships, you're able to pull together and accomplish things that you never thought were possible.

**Life Chapter 2: Initial Training - In Their Own Words****Matias Ferreira, Lance Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps**

Well, it's a tradition in Paris Island, South Carolina. You go on there, and you run out, and they'll tell you most powerful, elite fighting forces have gone through this place, and you're going to respect the traditions and everything else that we have, and courtesies, and you're going to run off this bus, and you're going to go get lined up in those formation footprints. Then you see everybody just run out of the bus and everybody goes up and lines up on the yellow footprints. Everybody is standing in formation before you know it. That's how it all comes together. It all starts about discipline, doing what you were told and instead of saying, "You'll get there. You'll get there," you say, "Go to the footprints, and the footprints are designed for you to be in perfect formation." That's one of the reasons that you run out and go on the yellow footprints.



**Elizabeth Rishkofski, Senior Airman, U.S. Air Force**

Being in the Air Force at the very beginning, it's of course, you know, you go through boot camp and tech school, it always gets better. At the moment that I was in, I knew that [what] I was doing, I was part of something. With the first year is when you learn what your place is in this huge organization. I mean a lot of people, outside people, see it as an organization, as just a military part of the government. The way the first year you get to learn that it's not just an organization, it's a community. You have your own cultures. You have your own um, it's a family. And the way that I felt was just immense pride, especially right after boot camp. You get out of boot camp and you just have this idea of what they have taught you, the way that it's going to be. You're going to be, you're gonna be working for your country and this is why you're working and this is why you're here and—so, while I was there, I would say that the pride was what stood out the most for me.

**Life Chapter 4: Military Career Continuation Decisions - In Their Own Words**

**Larry B. Aramanda, Major, U.S. Army**

It takes a lot more courage to tell your family that you're going back again. They don't like it. That's probably the toughest thing is saying goodbye to your family.

**Laura Pokiyan, Veteran, U.S. Navy**

I stayed because I liked it. And I kept liking it, and I kept liking it more and more and more, and so to me I always thought, "Well I'll get out of the navy when I don't enjoy it anymore or I'm not having fun anymore," and you know oddly enough, it took me 30 years to get to that point so.

**Nestor Aponte, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps**

It's been challenging mentally, physically from the start. Mentally now the more rank, more responsibility, you got more tasks, so much more many things going on at once that you gotta make sure you stay organized on what needs to take priority and what you need to do first and take care of first. It's a learning curve. I'm still not there. Perfect. Nobody's perfect. I'm still not there where I need to be. I still got work to do. But that, like I said before, that's when you got your leadership. Even though I picked up a little bit of rank, I still got other people to look up to and people to mentor me. Chain of command. I still get mentored because I'm not up there, I don't have the experience a first sergeant would have, like a gunny would have. So I look up to them to give me that mentorship so to know how to solve some problems. Now there are harder problems. At first you're a lance corporal, you just worrying about waking up, waking up and being where you're supposed to be and, you know, make sure you're right. And now you gotta make sure they're doing that plus the job plus all this and managing the job. So you learn. You get your mentorship. You deal with it. You experienced. Your experiences will help. Everything will help from your experience from way lower lance corporal will help all the way up to now. Everything comes in together to make you better and to make everybody better.

**Life Chapter 5: Separation from Military Service - In Their Own Words**

**Anna Verschoore, Clinical Social Worker, National Intrepid Center of Excellence**

That loyalty and that sense of pride about serving and about volunteering and sacrificing is something that they also feel a loss about when they stop serving.

**Artie Shelton, U.S. Army Retired, Consultant, VA**

When you go through the training within the military, I think it builds a certain type of morale. You develop certain ethics and values, especially if you stay in and you retire. This becomes part of your makeup and your culture. The integrity and the discipline and all this gives you a brotherhood or sisterhood, however you like to look at it. And so this bond, there's a bond that stays with you, it's this discipline, and I think that forever from that point that you've joined or even retired that this stays with you forever. It's just the values that you've acquired over the number of years. And also the fact of when you're in a conflict, these are the people that your lives depend on each other, working together as a team.

**Matthew Steiner, Veteran, U.S. Marine Corps**

My biggest struggles coming out from service to the civilian world were, I mean, this whole, this completely different lifestyle is left behind and all of a sudden, I mean, it's cut off. Nobody's—I mean, your buddies aren't there any more, your best friends that you learned training for 30 days off straight, and 29 Palms with, that you fought and sweat with in Iraq, got shot at. Those friends are gone, that tight knit group. Because you completely drop off your high school friends; these are your new brothers; these are your new pals. And then you're just, I mean, you're just all of a sudden dropped off. You know, I can remember—I'm from Oklahoma originally—and I'll never forget the day that I literally drove my Explorer from 29 Palms California to Broken Arrow Oklahoma and then my dad was mowing the yard, I wasn't in the desert anymore, and my mom was out there drinking lemonade, and it was just "it's over." You know? I mean, what do you—there's this sort of sense of fear; there's this sense of "God, what do I do now?" But, you know, I would say that thank God for my then girlfriend and now wife at the time. That that kind of helped me out. And then there's also, you know, there's that transition to civilian world, but a lot of Veterans [are] going back to school, back to college. And I can remember being 22 years old sitting in that college classroom, I had this skull shirt on with my unit on it from, that we had made in Iraq about our service, and I'm sitting in the class with 18 year olds wearing flip flops you know and thinking about my buddies who are fighting over there and thinking like "why aren't you over there? Why are you wearing flip flops when there are kids your age [over there]," and you think about that going to college football games. It's definitely not easy. You know, you hear all these things about PTSD and TBI and substance abuse, you know, and that, it takes a toll on some Veterans. But those Veterans that aren't doing that, it's still tough for them because you're still leaving that culture because that's all you knew from 18 to 22 years old. Even though it was a great experience that ultimately helps you out, those first 2 years or whatever, it's tough. Because all of a sudden you find out the job that you had, if you're in a weapons company in the Marine Corps or artillery tanks, what do you do with that when you get out? I mean there's all this pride in there like "I used to be in charge of so much, million dollars of equipment. You know I could bench press this, I could swim this, I could hike with this," you know. But that doesn't necessarily mean—there's pride in it, but then you've got to figure out, well, what do I do with that now, you know? And so.

**Life Chapter 6: Veteran Status - In Their Own Words****Lisa French, Veteran, U.S. Air Force/Spouse, U.S. Air Force**

My greatest challenges from transitioning to being active duty to Veteran, I think, is my spouse is still active duty, and I do think it's difficult sometimes to watch him put on the uniform and know that he's still serving our country. And I'm doing it in a way, in a manner; I still get to help, work with Service Members, but it's different. I miss that. There's a part of me that feels like it's missing some days. And being close to my spouse and getting to see that and live that is nice, but there's also times where I'm envious of that.

**Mervin William Bierman, Veteran, U.S. Air Force**

Retirement is that event in your life where everything changes. It is akin to the loss of a spouse; it is akin to losing your job; it is akin to being released. Suddenly, you are on your own. And the Department of Defense does a wonderful job of trying to prepare you. You have to take these preparations seriously. This is important. And simply attending a class and daydreaming through it, "yes, yes, I'll have to fill out a will, I'll have to do this, I'll have to do that, I'll have to do the other things" is not the same as actually sitting down at the kitchen table and saying "how are my finances? How am I going to pay the rent? How am I going to pay for my kid's education? How am I gonna keep the truck on the road?" It's a traumatic experience to wake up that Monday after you've retired, after the ceremony is over, after all the cake's been eaten and all the hands shook, you received your shadow box and it's sitting in a box in the living room, to wake up that next morning and realize it's gone. It's different. If you're lucky, you have a job to go to. If you're not, it's time to pick up the paper and look for one. And anyone who tells you that retirement isn't a life-changing event, has not done it.

**Shawn Garrett, Veteran, U.S. Marine Corps**

Putting on my uniform, You know, I'm gonna tell my wife I would die happy if I can go to work every day and put on a uniform and spend the rest of my life in uniform. I would be perfectly content in doing that. I mean it's another love, you know. I love my wife one way, you know, and I love the Marine Corps the other. Even in my civilian life now I still engrossed in with the Marine Corps. I have not left the Marine Corps. The only thing that has changed in me is how I dress. Yeah. It's the uniform. And of course, it's the people as well. The bonds that I've made with my Marines which I still keep in contact with, which I still have their phone numbers. I still call and check up on them. So, those bonds will never, you know, they will always be there. It's the camaraderie. It's friendships that, it's those shared experiences that you can't get, you know, that I can't have with my wife because it's just, that's just a different relationship. It's a totally different aspect of life. And that's you know, yeah, I miss that. Of course, absolutely.

**In Their Own Words: Service Members and Veterans Seeking Healthcare When Injured or Ill****Miranda Willett, Veteran, U.S. Marine Corps**

...one of the Marines that was here who was a combat engineer, and I got to know him and his family quite well, and he was unhappy here because he came from a unit where if an officer came into the room, you stood up. Well, they're trying to be nice to them here. They forget that when they strip away the military, that cuts the legs out from these Marines. And so sometimes I think it's better to keep all that going because it reminds them. But if you just say, OK you can wear civilian clothes and you can wander around and you can be impolite or you cannot stand up when an officer walks into the room, or you can be kind of snotty, I don't think that helps them. I think it would be better to hold on to some of those things. Remind them, hey, you're a Marine. And this is what we in the Marine Corps did. And combat is an ugly miserable thing, but now you're back in the Marine Corps, you're back in the brotherhood, you need to be a Marine, a warrior. And you need to stand for what's right. And you need to get your attitude readjusted. And if they lose that, then they have nothing. Then they have nothing to hold onto. Then it's like, get me out of here 'cause I don't understand any of it anymore.

**Chris Abner, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps**

When Marines leave my command here at Wounded Warrior Battalion, I still call them once a month, once every two times a month, just to make sure that they're doing ok. Just to make sure that trust is still there because if something's happening with the VA, you know they don't think they're getting that care, they need to be able to call me and maybe we can do something on our end. But if there's a problem with that Marine, and he doesn't trust anybody, where is it eventually going to lead to? A Marine with severe PTSD. You know he's not talking to the VA, he's not talking to any of his old Marine buddies, he's not married; it has a good chance of leading to suicide. And that's a huge fear that we have here is that we do not want that to happen. We do not want to have that Marine living out on the street as, you know, a combat veteran and, you know, he's out on the street, he's served his country honorably, and now nobody's taking care of him. So if there's maybe just that one person he trusts somewhere in there, whether it's his doctor, one of his former Marines, it could have stopped somewhere. It could have been prevented.

**Alma Sanchez, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps**

I think they do, especially the ones that really can't go back out there. You know, the ones that are injured that, you know, has, they've already been told like "look, you're not gonna be able to stay in the Marine Corps longer than this amount of time. You're gonna have to retire." And a lot of the Marines that I, that fall under me, I see that. There's a Marine that wants to stay in, but the Marine Corps has already said "look you don't have the capability to stay in longer. You have to retire." And he feels like "what did I do? Why, like why me? There's a bunch of other Marines that you know probably don't put as much effort as I, you know, I do because I want to stay in" but sometimes it's just doesn't work out.

**Candee Berck, Social Work Officer, U.S. Air Force**

I think some of the most important things that medical providers can keep in mind when working with Veterans is that they are the heroes of our nation's freedoms and foundations. Yes, they are patients. But they have done so much more than an NFL football star, and they receive very little credit for losing their arm or leg. I realize that they get the Purple Heart and they get an award, but they have truly made a huge sacrifice that not many people are willing to do.

## The Lasting Effects of Military Culture

**Miranda Willet, Veteran, USMC; Provider, Wounded Warrior Battalion West:**

### On Customs, Courtesies and Loyalty

I still, when they play colors and we stop and turn around toward the flag, I still get the willies. I still feel that what I did, even though I didn't do anything other than push a lot of papers around and take care of Marines, what I did was honorable. I learned lessons of... I learned very important lessons from people who told me, "yeah, you're going to make a mistake, and I'm going to back you up, I'm going to instruct you differently, and then we're going to go on." And I did experience that. And I was taught in leadership your take care of your Marines, your Marines will take care of you. That's all we needed to know. You take care of the people who are subordinate to you 'cause they need your help. They're the ones doing the heavy lifting. It's our job to take care of them. And I learned how to take care of other people, how to respect our country, for all of its warts. I just learned some valuable lessons. How to get up and go to work every day, dressed for work. You know, the Marines learn that, and any employer should know, if nothing else, these Marines know how to get up, get dressed, and come to work shaved.

### On Discipline and Values

And I know how to take orders. I know how to take orders, and if you scream at me, I'm not going to curl up and die because somebody already screamed at me. And you get screamed at when you're going through training; you learn to listen to it, take the lesson out of it, but don't take it personally.

And so there is a lot of that that you learn, but it's interesting because I have children in the military, and my children went through the Naval Academy. They don't go to the Naval Academy because they're so patriotic. They go to the Naval Academy because they're looking to get in the military to get their education paid for. They go there for a variety of reasons – some of them [because] I've just been recruited for a sport. It's when you're there that you learn to be patriotic. When you're in the military...

### On Caring Responsibility and Patriotism

Love, care for your fellow man—yes, those are lessons and a sense of ownership of this country. I have a sense of ownership because I put it out there. That flag is my flag. Yeah, you can burn it 'cause it's really just a symbol. But we stood up for you to burn it, to have the right to burn that flag. That's what we do. We think you're wrong, but you have the right to do it. I have ownership of what's going in the country because I played a part in it, and that flag is my flag, and I fly that flag at my home every day, and I look at it as I go out the door, and yes, it's important.

## Cultural Awareness Pitfalls

**Therapist:** Hey, Soldier. I mean, Marine.

**Therapist:** So you're an O-3... that means you're enlisted, right?

**Therapist:** How do they say it? Embrace the suck, soldier. I mean Marine.

**Therapist:** Chief? Like that saying, "too many chiefs, not enough Indians..?" Do you ever feel like that?

**Therapist:** Wow, you're lucky, I've heard IUDs can be deadly.

**Therapist:** Could you slow down, I'm not getting all the acronyms.

**Therapist:** Oh Dark Thirty? What's that?

**Therapist:** FUBAR?

**Therapist:** MRAP, is that like an MRE?

**Therapist:** Wait, wait, I'm sorry, Charlie Foxtrot?

**Therapist:** Um, Bravo Zulu to you too.

**Therapist:** I don't care if you're worried about passing your fitness test. You have to keep off your foot.

**Therapist:** PT is useless. No one needs to do jumping jacks in combat.

**Therapist:** Can't you just ask your supervisor to limit your duty time?

**Therapist:** I can't give you time off. It's not in the protocol.

**Therapist:** Well, I'm a psychologist, not a gynecologist, Corporal. Pain is just weakness leaving your body.

**Therapist:** What difference does it make if you don't deploy with your company?

**Therapist:** No, we have to put you on non-deployment status. Look I don't see what the problem is. It's more important to take care of yourself than it is to deploy.

**Therapist:** But wouldn't you rather be discharged than have to go back over there?

## Module 2: Summary

**Dr. Watson:** Congratulations, you've completed Module 2 of the Military Culture Training for Healthcare Professionals course. We're aware that this module included a lot of information. It was our goal to convey that there are a number of ways that the military can have an impact on your patients, based on different life chapters and a number of organizational themes.

**Dr. Brim:** In module 2, you were given an opportunity to learn about various functions and roles of military organizations, including:

- The main characteristics of the military organizational culture
- The key roles that all service branches play
- Each branch's specialized roles
- Service specific greetings
- Types of military personnel
- Military contracts
- The importance of military traditions, customs, and courtesies
- Military hierarchies, and;
- Military standards and lifestyles.

**Dr. Watson:** These military organizations and roles will have various impacts on your patients' lives, depending in part on which life chapter they are involved with at the time in regards to their military life. These life chapters include:

- Their time before Enlistment or Commissioning
- Basic Training
- Their First Assignment, Tour of Duty, or Deployment
- The continuation of their Military Career
- Their Separation From Military Service, and
- Their Veteran Status

**Dr. Brim:** Particularly important is how the functions of military organizations and roles affect Service members and Veterans in need of healthcare. The role of injury or illness was explored from the perspective of military organizations, missions, and roles, contractual obligations such as confidentiality, the change of hierarchical status, military traditions such as the Purple Heart, and the change in lifestyle that results from injury or illness, and finally the potential impact of injury or illness on the Service member or Veteran. You were reminded to look for the key themes of belonging, obligations to others, relationships of responsibility and authority, veneration for customs and traditions, and the uniqueness of military lifestyles. You were also advised to make sure medical profiles are sufficiently detailed to facilitate diagnosis and treatment.

Cultural vital signs and culturally competent behaviors were scattered throughout this course to guide you in exploring how each of your patients uniquely relate to the order, discipline and regulations required of military Service members.

**Dr. Watson:** In the next Module, Module 3, we will begin working on your ability to develop and implement appropriate interventions for military patients. You will learn about the spectrum of stressors and psychological health hazards associated with military service, and you will be introduced to the unique support resources intrinsic to military organizations that help Service members and their families cope and recover.

Finally, in Module 4: Treatment Resources, Prevention and Tools, you will be provided tools for assessing the impact of military culture on health, and guidance for culturally competent treatment planning.